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Good News
FROM
SCOTLAND:
OR THE
Abjuration
AND THE
Kirk of SCOTLAND
RECONCIL'D

Reprinted in the Year, 1712

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Good News

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SCOTLAND, &c.

TH E R E are two remarkable Authors who have lately made their Appearance in *Scotland*; the one combating the Abjuration, the other defending it, However, these Gentlemen may set up to be wiser than their Teachers, yet sure I am, our Clergy know their Interest, and their Duty better, than to be imposed upon by the one, who has made it his Work to raise some needless Scruples; or be wheedled by the other, who (it seems) had no Way left him to get clear of these scruples, but by a Flight of Metaphysicks, and prescinding about the Nature of Limitations and Conditions. An Oath sure has Nothing to do with such Jargon.

I hope to do more Honour and Justice to our Clergy by convincing the Nation that they'll readily come into the Abjuration: And this I gather, *First*, From Precedents; *Secondly*, From the Nature of the Abjuration; and *Lastly*, From the fatal

Consequences that must follow upon the Refusal of it ; all which I shall lay before my Reader in such a plain Manner as may fit the meanest Capacity.

As to the First of these, whoever will be pleased to look over the History of our Church, will find, that our Clergy have readily gone into all the Abjurations (and no few there have been) that were contriv'd by our Nation since their first Establishment. The first we meet with is the National Covenant, 1580, in which all the Errors of the *Romish* Church are abjured: But because this was imposed by the Civil Authority, I shall not reckon upon it. In the Year 1638, our Clergy, to show their good Dispositions towards Abjurations, did, without the Consent of the Civil Authority, revive the foresaid Abjuration, with some necessary Additions (by way of Explanation) of a very high Nature. Neither shall I lay great Stress on this, because Popish Errors were only abjured by this Covenant, and who would not do that? But that which clears this Matter beyond Exception, is the Solemn League and Covenant. Our Clergy wisely consider'd, that the abjuring only Popish Errors discovered but a small Degree of Zeal for the reformed Religion; and therefore (in order to a thorough Reformation) they by this Covenant abjured even all the protestant Errors, such as Episcopacy, and all the Branches of the Hierarchy. I could give more Instances of this Nature; but I hope, what I have said, will satisfy my Reader, that our Clergy are so far from having any Aversion from Abjurations; that they have run upon them when

whenever they came to offer themselves; though they were so far from having the Countenance of the Civil Authority for so doing, that they met with many Discouragements upon that Account.

I come now in the second Place to the Nature of the Abjuration, which consists chiefly of Two Parts: The First is the abjuring one who pretends to be the last of the Race and Family of *Stuart*. Whoever considers the many Wrestlings of our Church ever since their first Establishment with some, I (for Manners sake) forbear to name, the publick and avow'd Grounds of our Fasts and Humiliations, together with the whole Procedure of our Church from the Year 1638, to the Act of the West Kirk in the Year 1650, cannot suspect there is any Thing in abjuring this pretended Prince inconsistent either with our Profession, or our Practice; for let that Gentleman's Blood, Claim or Title, be what it will, we have nothing to do with him; the Doctrines of Hereditary Right, Passive Obedience and Non-Resistance, never got Footing among us. *Buchanan de Jure Regni, Lex Rex, & Jus Populi*, are our Guides in such Cases. The other Part of the Abjuration, is the settling the Succession in the Illustrious House of *Hanover*, they being Protestants, about which I am sure our Clergy have no Manner of Scruple.

But because there are a great many Difficulties raised about the lesser Matters of this Oath, I shall do my best to remove them: And *First*, we are told there are some Things in this Oath doubtful, which I deny; and though there were

were, yet it is no greater Argument against this Abjuration than it would have been against all our former Abjurations. For Example, the National Covenant was taken by all Ranks and Degrees of Men, Now would it have been a good Argument for every Blockhead to refuse it, because there was *Opus Operatum* and *Station* in it. I trow not: Our Clergy would never have allow'd such a weak Defence. One would think, but I am not positive in it, that all Abjurations, suppose in their own Nature something that's doubtful or controverted, otherwise there were the less Necessity of them, and by them we have this remarkable Benefit, that what might be doubtful before, is made clear in all Times coming.

But *Secondly*, We are told that this Abjuration is a limiting the Providence of God Almighty, and an Invasion upon the Claim of Right he has to the Government of this lower World. I take this to be a most senseless Scruple. The Providence of God Almighty cannot be limited by any Humane Contrivances, a Proposition not only evident in its own Nature, but in Fact. Did our Abjuring Episcopacy in the Solemn League and Covenant put a Bar upon the Providence of God to restore it? We found it otherwise; for it was re-establish'd a few Years after. Or did the Tender, by which the whole Race and Family of *Stuart* were abjured, limit the Providence of God from restoring that Illustrious House to its ancient and just Rights. Nay, when that Royal Family was brought to the greatest Extremity, and was so low, that it

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seem'd to be beyond all Humane Relief, God Almighty interposed, and gave such a Deliverance, as manifested both the Power and Wisdom of the Deliverer.

Nay, Abjurations are so far from putting Limitations upon Providence, that oftentimes they are but sorry Restraints even upon the Contrivers of them. None were more forward to bring in Episcopacy than some of our most zealous Covenanters; nor had any a greater Hand in bringing back *Charles* the Second to sit upon the Throne of his Ancestors, than those who were the Promoters of the Tender.

I hope I have made it very plain that Abjurations do not limit the Providence of God Almighty. Indeed, when God, by the visible Hand of his Providence, at any Time interposes, and breaks in upon a Legal Establishment, whatever Fences it has planted for its Security, this supercedes all antecedent Ties of whatever Nature they be; and to deny this, were to sap the Revolution Principles. and undermine the very Ground on which we just now stand.

Certainly the Wit of Man comes short, when he would set Limits unto Providence. What greater Security can we poor Creatures project, than tainting the Blood; and yet we find, *Henry* the Seventh of *England* was raised to the Throne not many Days after his Blood was tainted, and that in a solemn Manner. Indeed such visible Strokes of the Divine Providence are oftentimes very necessary to awaken and keep up in us the Sense of an invisible Power, which is too often forgot so long as we prosper in our own Way.

But *Thirdly*, We are told that there is something in this Abjuration inconsistent with our Covenant. I love to deal fairly and honestly, and therefore cannot deny it : But then it should be carefully consider'd, that 'tis very improper to say any Thing is inconsistent with another, unless that other Thing have a real Existence. Now the Solemn League and Covenant (betwixt which and the Abjuration there is an Inconsistence) is vacated by Law ; it is declared void and null, and consequently hath no real Existence.

But granting that the Covenant were still standing in Force, I hope 'tis no new Thing to find our Clergy swearing Inconsistencies. This has been so common a Practice, I wonder to see any Body surpriz'd with it. All our Clergy before the Year 1638 had taken an Oath of Canonical Obedience to their Bishops ; and yet did not these same Men take the Solemn League. I hope I need not prove that there was some Inconsistency betwixt these. Nay, did not Seven hundred of our Clergy, and there are but Nine hundred in the whole, who took the Solemn League, submit to Episcopacy in the Year 1662, and take the Oath of Canonical Obedience to their Bishops ? Nay, subscribe the Declaration, which was an express Renunciation of the Solemn League. There was indeed in the Course of Twenty Years such a Crowd of Inconsistencies gone into by a Set of the best and most learned Clergy ever we had, that I can neither satisfy myself, nor any other, how this came about, save upon this Maxim *Posteriora derogant prioribus*, that is, The last Oath we take

take evacuates all the former, both *de Jure* and *de Facto*, provided always there be Inconsistencies; and if this was a Good Rule, it is so still, *quod erat demonstrandum*.

But then in the *Fourth* and *Last* Place, 'Tis complained, that we must take this Oath willingly and heartily; and where is the Danger of that? An Oath is a solemn Part of the Worship of God; and who can doubt but our Clergy, who are zealous of all the other Parts of Worship, will heartily join in this? 'Tis indeed at best but an improper Way of speaking, to say a Man does any Thing unwillingly; for if he does, we cannot say he is accountable for it. No Action can be said to be criminal, if it be not voluntary. However I would not have this so understood, as that I mean there is less Danger in taking this Oath unwillingly than heartily; for an Oath must be taken in the Sense of the Imposer. We must take it in a fair and honest Way, or let it alone: Our foolish Explanations, or mental Reservations, will never mend the Matter in the Sight of God or Man.

I come now to consider the fatal Consequences that may follow upon the Refusal of this Oath: And *First* Thereby ye endanger the People committed to your Charge, by leaving them as Sheep without a Shepherd, to be devoured by the wild Beasts of the Forest, that are ready to break in upon them. I tremble, I tremble to think of this. You see our Hedges and Fences are broke down, and we lie open to our Enemies, what shall then become of us if we lose
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our Watchmen? I wish this were all. Nay, by your Refusal you endanger your own Families, and expose them to Want, when by the Ties of Nature and Christianity ye are obliged to provide for them. Consider that sad word, *He is worse than an Infidel that provides not for his own Family.*

Upon the Review of all, I address my self to you the Clergy of our Church. Much depends upon your Behaviour at this Juncture. There are several Bills passed of late which cannot but be very uneasy to you: The Toleration is a hard Chapter. Say of them whatever ye please, only do not say they are ill done. Ye may mourn in secret, but not murmur; for that may provoke your Superiors to put yet harder Tasks upon you; and therefore give me Leave with all due Submission to lay these Cautions before you.

First, Take Care not to meddle with any Thing in your publick Acts which can be construed in any ways to interfere with what the Parliament has done. The Times will not bear this so well as in the Years 48 and 49; nor would your Enemies seek a better Handle to persuade the Parliament to make some new Regulations in your Courts of Judicature, which ye would not like: For though your Government be secured by the Treaty of Union, yet a great many Things are left so loose, I know not what to make of it. I'll give a Hint but of some few Things: 1. May not the Parliament declare it
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only to be in the Power of the Queen to call a General Assembly once a Year, and adjourn them when she shall think fit? 2. That it shall be Treason for them to sit after the said Adjournment; 3. That the Queen shall name the Moderator, and limit the Assembly only to treat upon such Heads as she in her great Wisdom shall be pleased to lay before you. Ye have a Precedent for this in the Famous Assembly at *Westminster*, so justly esteem'd by us. 4. Might not the Parliament find, that seeing there are in *Scotland* ten Lay-Elders for one Preaching Elder, and that the first have a great Plurality upon the other in all Kirk Sessions, which is the radical Indicatory from which all others take their Rise, and have at least an Equality in all Presbyteries, they should have the same Proportion in all General Assemblies? And for this we have very early Precedents in the Practice of our Reformers from the Year 1560 to 1570; and however this might lessen the Power of the Clergy, yet it would take wonderfully with the great Body of the Lairds. 5. Might not the Parliament declare, that the Power of appointing publick Fasts was solely in the Queen's Person; and to compleat all, discharge the Commission of the Kirk in all Time coming, which ye know has no Foundation in Law. How far all these, or any of them, are inconsistent with the Treaty of Union, 'tis only the Parliament can tell us, as they have done already in the Case of a Toleration and Patronages.

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The *Other* Caution I would give you, is to take Care that your People grow not tumultuary, and break out into open Violence. This might endanger our whole Constitution, and bring on a Forfeiture of all our reserved Articles. We have often tried our Hands by Force of Arms, but were never successful, except against that unfortunate Prince King *Charles* the First, which yet ended in your, as well as his, Ruin. The Government of *Britain* is not to be bullied by the Commotion of an undisciplined Rabble.

In the *Last* Place, Take Care to gain the Nobility and Gentry by a mannerly and prudent Behaviour; and though it will take some Time before they can forget your sawcy Carriage while the Sun heats warm upon you, yet I doubt not, but by stooping a little (they will not expect much from you) ye may get in upon them, and thereby so fortify your Establishment, that it cannot be shaken. Many of the Ladies are your Friends, and they will do all they can to soften their Husbands. But if a sower and peevish Humour must still reign among you, and ye continue to take part with the Servant against his Master, who knows but the Nobility and Gentry may get the greatest Body of the Nation to make an Address in Favour of Episcopacy; and 'tis not hard to tell what the Parliament might do in such an Event. They might shorten that long Word *Unalterable*, and settle us once more upon the Inclinations of the People, in Order to make the Union more compleat.

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We were sure very unhappy, if there were not many ways left us to make the Union better.

The Nation cannot but be very sensible of their Happiness under your Government; for though they had much Peace and Plenty under Episcopacy, yet they wanted pure Ordinances, and a Gospel Ministry. You have always born hard upon the Prerogative, and been Champions for the Rights and Liberties of the People; and though ye made some false Steps in the Reign of King *James* the First, while ye were Sharers of his Favours, yet when ye found him going, none more forward to help on the Work. Our People had turn'd soft and effeminate, had not ye rouz'd them from Time to Time to petition their Monarchs with the Sword in their Hands. I should weary my Reader, if I did enumerate all the Advantages we have had by your Establishment; but that which crowns all, is, that while under Episcopacy, we languish'd under an old and musty Constitution of a Lineal Succession, and were proud of the Independency of our State, which we had preserved, with that of our Succession, for Two thousand Years: Ye have happily reformed even that; and under your wise Administration, we are united to our wealthy Neighbours, and brought under the Legislature of the wisest People upon earth: And now what would the World say, if ye quarrel even with their Proceedings? Your Enemies will not fail to tell us, that ye were never pleased with any Government, but when the Reins and Whip too were in your own Hands.

I have but one Advice more to give you in this critical Juncture, and that is, not to put off your taking the Abjuration till the Term assign'd you by Law; that will not look so well. I have pretty good Assurance that the Pretender is in no good Way of Health, and if he should slip off before ye abjure him, ye lose an Opportunity never to be retriev'd.

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